

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the subject application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (cancelled).
2. (cancelled).
3. (cancelled).
4. (cancelled).
5. (cancelled).
6. (cancelled).
7. (cancelled).
8. (cancelled).
9. (cancelled).
10. (cancelled).
11. (cancelled).
12. (cancelled).
13. (cancelled).

14. (cancelled).

15. (cancelled).

16. (cancelled).

17. (cancelled).

18. (cancelled).

19. (cancelled).

20. (cancelled).

21. (currently amended) A method ~~for determining~~controlling and directing the status of an answered telephone during the course of an outbound telephone call, comprising:

A. placing, with an automated calling system, a telephone call to a location having a telephone number associated with a target person contained in a predetermined list of target people;

B. upon ~~said~~the telephone call being answered, initiating a prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person;

C. receiving a spoken response from an answering person;

D. performing a speaker-independent speech recognition analysis on ~~said~~the spoken response to determine ~~a semantic~~the meaning of ~~said~~the spoken response; and

E. providing ~~at least any~~ one of the following conditional responses based on ~~said semantic~~the meaning of the spoken response as determined by said~~the~~ speaker-independent speech recognition analysis in accordance with a set of speaker-independent speech recognition enabled states of conversation including: (1) the answering person indicates that he or she is the target person, (2) the answering person indicates that he or she is not the target person, (3) the answering person indicates that the target person is not present at the location, (4) the answering person indicates a hold request, (5) the answering person requests the identity of the caller, (6)

the answering person indicates that the telephone number is not the correct number for the target person; and (7) the speaker-independent speech recognition analysis cannot determine the meaning of the spoken response from the answering person; and

F. responding appropriately to the results of the speech recognition analysis including the following conditional responses:

a. if ~~said-semantic~~the meaning of the spoken response indicates that ~~said-the~~ answering person is ~~said-the~~ target person, initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with ~~said-the~~ target person;

b. if ~~said-semantic~~the meaning of the spoken response indicates that ~~said-the~~ answering person is not ~~said-the~~ target person, initiating a prerecorded query asking for ~~said~~the target person, wherein, upon receiving a subsequent spoken response and determining whether a ~~semantic~~the meaning of the ~~said~~-subsequent spoken response indicates that ~~said-the~~ target person is now on the line, further comprising initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with ~~said~~the target person;

c. if ~~said-semantic~~the meaning of the spoken response indicates that ~~said~~the target person is not present at ~~said~~the location, initiating a prerecorded query asking to leave a message for ~~said~~the target person;

d. if ~~said-semantic~~the meaning of the spoken response indicates that ~~said~~the spoken response is a hold request, entering a wait state to wait for ~~said~~the target person to provide a spoken response to ~~said~~the telephone call, wherein upon receiving a subsequent spoken response, determining a ~~semantic~~the meaning of the subsequent spoken response to determine whether ~~said-the~~ target person is now on the line, and if the ~~semantic~~-meaning of the subsequent spoken response indicates that the target person is now on the line, further comprising initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with ~~said~~the target person;

e. if ~~said-semantic~~the meaning of the spoken response indicates that ~~said~~ the spoken response is a request for the identity of the ~~entity responsible for the automated calling system~~caller, initiating a prerecorded response indicating the identity of the calling party, repeating ~~said-the~~ prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person, and repeating step C through step E;

f. if ~~said-semantic~~the meaning of the spoken response indicates that ~~said~~the telephone number is not the correct number for the target person, initiating a prerecorded apology message and terminating ~~said~~the telephone call; and

g. if ~~said~~the speaker-independent speech recognition analysis cannot determine a ~~semantic~~the meaning of ~~said~~the spoken response, repeating ~~said~~the prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person, and repeating step C through step E.

22. (cancelled).

23. (cancelled).

24. (cancelled).

25. (New) A method according to claim 21, further including the of detecting an answering machine upon the telephone call being answered.

26. (New) A method according to claim 21, wherein detecting an answering machine includes:

a. upon the telephone call being answered, waiting for a predetermined time period for a spoken response;

b. upon receiving the spoken response, playing a prerecorded greeting prompt which asks for the target person;

c. while playing the prerecorded greeting prompt, attempting to detect a further spoken response in excess of a predetermined time parameter;

d. in the absence of detecting a further spoken response during the playing of the prerecorded greeting prompt, initiating a query application;

e. upon detecting a further spoken response during the playing of the prerecorded greeting prompt, terminating the playing of the prerecorded prompt; and

f. indicating that an answering machine has been detected.

27. (New) The method of claim 26, further comprising attempting to detect a beep tone during the playing of the prerecorded greeting prompt and, upon the detection of a beep tone, interrupting the prerecorded greeting prompt and playing a prerecorded answering machine message prompt.

28. (New) The method of claim 27, further comprising attempting to detect a beep tone during the playing of the prerecorded answering machine message prompt and, upon the detection of a beep tone, interrupting the prerecorded answering machine message prompt and replaying the prerecorded prompt.

29. (New) A system for automatically directing and controlling an answered telephone during the course of an outbound telephone call so as to automatically initiate a speaker-independent speech recognition application with a target person, comprising:

- an automated calling subsystem, for placing the automated outbound telephone call to the target person; and

- an automated multi-state enabled speaker-independent speech recognition device configured to:

- A. initiate a prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person upon the telephone call being answered;

- B. receive a spoken response from an answering person;

- C. perform a speaker-independent speech recognition analysis on the spoken response to determine the meaning of the spoken response; and

- D. provide any one of the following conditional responses based on the meaning of the spoken response as determined by the speaker-independent speech recognition analysis in accordance with a set of speaker-independent speech recognition enabled states of conversation including (1) the answering person indicates that he or she is the target person, (2) the answering person indicates that he or she is not the target person, (3) the answering person indicates that the target person is not present at the location, (4) the answering person indicates a hold request, (5) the answering person requests the identity of the caller, (6) the answering person indicates that the telephone number is not the correct number for the target person, and

(7) the speaker-independent speech recognition analysis cannot determine the meaning of the spoken response from the answering person:

a. if the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the answering person is the target person, initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with the target person;

b. if the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the answering person is not the target person, initiating a prerecorded query asking for the target person, wherein, upon receiving a subsequent spoken response and determining whether the meaning of the subsequent spoken response indicates that the target person is now on the line, further comprising initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with the target person;

c. if the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the target person is not present at the location, initiating a prerecorded query asking to leave a message for the target person;

d. if the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the spoken response is a hold request, entering a wait state to wait for the target person to provide a spoken response to the telephone call, wherein upon receiving a subsequent spoken response, determining the meaning of the subsequent spoken response to determine whether the target person is now on the line, and if the meaning of the subsequent spoken response indicates that the target person is now on the line, further comprising initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with the target person;

e. if the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the spoken response is a request for the identity of the caller, initiating a prerecorded response indicating the identity of the calling party, repeating the prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person, and repeating B through D;

f. if the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the telephone number is not the correct number for the target person, initiating a prerecorded apology message and terminating the telephone call; and

g. if the speaker-independent speech recognition analysis cannot determine the meaning of the spoken response, repeating the prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person, and repeating B through D.

30. (New) A system according to claim 29, wherein the automated multi-state enabled speaker-independent speech recognition device is further configured to detect an answering machine upon the telephone call being answered.

31. (New) A system according to claim 30, wherein the automated multi-state enabled speaker-independent speech recognition device is further configured to:

- a. wait for a predetermined time period for a spoken response upon the telephone call being answered;
- b. play a prerecorded greeting prompt which asks for the target person upon receiving the spoken response;
- c. attempt to detect a further spoken response in excess of a predetermined time parameter while playing the prerecorded greeting prompt;
- d. initiate a query application in the absence of detecting a further spoken response during the playing of the prerecorded greeting prompt;
- e. terminating the playing of the prerecorded prompt upon detecting a further spoken response during the playing of the prerecorded greeting prompt; and
- f. indicate that an answering machine has been detected.

32. (New) The system of claim 31, wherein the automated multi-state enabled speaker-independent speech recognition device is further configured to attempt to detect a beep tone during the playing of the prerecorded greeting prompt and, upon the detection of a beep tone, interrupting the prerecorded greeting prompt and playing a prerecorded answering machine message prompt.

33. (New) The system of claim 32, wherein the automated multi-state enabled speaker-independent speech recognition device is further configured to attempt to detect a beep tone during the playing of the prerecorded answering machine message prompt and, upon the detection of a beep tone, interrupting the prerecorded answering machine message prompt and replaying the prerecorded prompt.

34. (new) A method of directing and controlling the course of an outbound telephone call comprising:

A. placing, with an automated calling system, a telephone call to a location having a telephone number associated with a target person contained in a predetermined list of one or more telephone numbers and associated target persons;

B. upon the telephone call being answered, initiating a prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person;

C. receiving a spoken response from an answering person;

D. performing a speaker-independent speech recognition analysis on the spoken response to determine the meaning of the spoken response; and

E. if the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the answering person has responded that he or she is the target person, initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with the answering person.

35. (new) The method of claim 34, wherein in step D, if the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the answering person is not the target person, initiating a prerecorded query asking for the target person.

36. (new) The method of claim 35, wherein upon receiving a subsequent spoken response with a meaning indicating that target person answering the telephone call is now on line, further comprising initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with the target person.

37. (new) The method of claim 34, wherein in step D, if the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the target person is not available, initiating a prerecorded query asking to leave a message for the target person.

38. (new) The method of claim 37, wherein in step D, if the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the target person is not available, further comprising providing a prerecorded message to the answering person.

39. (new) The method of claim 34, wherein in step D, if the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the spoken response is a hold request, further comprising entering a wait state to wait for the target person to provide a spoken response to the telephone call.

40. (new) The method of claim 39, wherein upon receiving a subsequent spoken response to the telephone call, determining the meaning of the subsequent spoken response to determine if the target person is on the line, and if the meaning of the subsequent spoken response indicates that the answering person has responded that he or she is the target person, further comprising initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with the target person.

41. (new) The method of claim 34, wherein in step D, if the meaning indicates that the spoken response is a request for the identity of the caller, further comprising initiating a prerecorded response identifying the caller, repeating the prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person, and repeating step C through step E.

42. (new) The method of claim 34, wherein in step D, if the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the telephone number is not the correct number for the target person, further comprising initiating a prerecorded apology message and terminating the telephone call.

43. (new) The method of claim 34, wherein in step D, if the speaker-independent speech recognition analysis cannot determine the meaning of the spoken response, further comprising repeating the prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person, and repeating step C through step E.

44. (new) A system for directing and controlling an answered telephone during the course of an outbound telephone call, comprising:

an automated telephone calling device for placing a telephone call to a location having a telephone number associated with a target person contained in a predetermined list of one or more telephone numbers and associated target persons; and

a speech recognition device which, upon the telephone call being answered, initiates a prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person, receives a spoken response from an answering person and performs a speaker-independent speech recognition analysis on the spoken response to determine a meaning of the spoken response;

wherein, if the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the answering person is the target person, the speech recognition device initiates a speaker-independent speech recognition application with the target person.

45. (new) The system of claim 44, wherein if the speech recognition device determines that the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the answering person is not the target person, the speech recognition device instructs the automated telephone calling device to initiate a prerecorded query asking for the target person and waiting for a subsequent spoken response.

46. (new) The system of claim 44, wherein upon receiving a subsequent spoken response, and the meaning of the subsequent spoken response indicates the target person has answered the telephone call, the speech recognition device initiates a speaker-independent speech recognition application with the target person.

47. (new) The system of claim 44, wherein if the speech recognition device determines that the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the target person is not present at the location, the speech recognition device instructs the automated telephone calling device to initiate a prerecorded query asking to leave a message for the target person.

48. (new) The system of claim 47, wherein the automated telephone calling device provides a prerecorded message to the answering person.

49. (new) The system of claim 44, wherein if the speech recognition device determines that the meaning of the spoken response is a hold request, the speaker-independent speech recognition application enters a wait state to wait for the target person to provide a spoken response to the telephone call.

50. (new) The system of claim 49, wherein having received a subsequent spoken response and the speech recognition device determines that the meaning of the subsequent spoken response indicates that the target person is now on the line, the speech recognition device initiates a speaker-independent speech recognition application with the target person.

51. (new) The system of claim 44, wherein if the semantic meaning of the spoken response is a request for the identity of the caller, the speech recognition device instructs the automated telephone calling device to initiate a prerecorded response indicating the identity of the caller, and to repeat the prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person;

wherein, upon receiving a spoken response from the answering person, the speech recognition device performs a speaker-independent speech recognition analysis on the spoken response to determine the meaning of the spoken response.

52. (new) The system of claim 44, wherein if the speech recognition device determines that the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the telephone number is not the correct number for the target person, the speech recognition device instructs the automated telephone calling device to initiate a prerecorded apology message and to terminate the telephone call.

53. (new) The system of claim 44, wherein if the speech recognition device cannot determine the meaning of the spoken response, the speech recognition device instructs the automated telephone calling device to repeat the prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person;

wherein, upon receiving a subsequent spoken response from the answering person, the speech recognition device performs a speaker-independent speech recognition analysis on the subsequent spoken response to determine the meaning of the subsequent spoken response.

54. (new) A method of controlling and directing the status of an answered telephone during the course of an outbound telephone call comprising:

- A. placing, with an automated calling system, a telephone call to a location having a telephone number associated with a target person contained in a predetermined list of target people;
- B. upon the telephone call being answered, initiating a prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person;
- C. receiving a spoken response from an answering person;
- D. performing a speaker-independent speech recognition analysis on the spoken response to determine a meaning of the spoken response; and
- E. providing any one of the following responses based on the semantic meaning as determined by the speaker-independent speech recognition analysis:
 - a. if the semantic meaning of the spoken response indicates that the answering person is the target person, initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with the target person;
 - b. if the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the answering person is not the target person, initiating a prerecorded query asking for the target person, wherein, upon receiving a subsequent spoken response and determining whether a meaning of the subsequent spoken response indicates that the target person is now on the line, further comprising initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with the target person;
 - c. if the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the target person is not present at the location, initiating a prerecorded query asking to leave a message for the target person;
 - d. if the semantic meaning of the spoken response indicates that the spoken response is a hold request, entering a wait state to wait for the target person to provide a spoken response to the telephone call, wherein upon receiving a subsequent spoken response, determining a semantic meaning of the subsequent spoken response to determine whether the target person is now on the line, and if the meaning of the subsequent spoken response indicates that the target person is now on the line, further comprising initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with the target person;
 - e. if the semantic meaning of the spoken response indicates that the spoken response is a request for the identity of the caller, initiating a prerecorded response indicating the

caller, repeating the prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person, and repeating step C through step E;

f. if the semantic meaning of the spoken response indicates that the telephone number is not the correct number for the target person, initiating a prerecorded apology message and terminating the telephone call; and

g. if the speaker-independent speech recognition analysis cannot determine a semantic meaning of the spoken response, repeating the prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person, and repeating step C through step E.

55. (new) A method of detecting an answering machine during an automated outbound call, comprising:

A. placing, with an automated calling system, a telephone call to a location having a telephone number associated with a target person contained in a predetermined list of one or more target people;

B. upon the telephone call being answered, waiting for a predetermined time period for a spoken response;

C. upon receiving the spoken response, playing a prerecorded greeting prompt which asks for the target person;

D. while playing the prerecorded greeting prompt, attempting to detect a further spoken response in excess of a predetermined time parameter;

E. in the absence of detecting the further spoken response during the playing of the prerecorded greeting prompt, initiating a query application;

F. upon detecting the further spoken response during the playing of the prerecorded greeting prompt, terminating the playing of the prerecorded prompt; and

G. indicating that an answering machine has been detected.

56. (new) The method of claim 55, further comprising attempting to detect a beep tone during the playing of the prerecorded greeting prompt and, upon the detection of a beep tone, interrupting the prerecorded greeting prompt and playing a prerecorded answering machine message prompt.

57. (new) The method of claim 56, further comprising attempting to detect a beep tone during the playing of the prerecorded answering machine message prompt and, upon the detection of a beep tone, interrupting the prerecorded answering machine message prompt and replaying the prerecorded prompt.